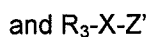


## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

This listing of claims replaces all other listings of claims.

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A biocompatible composition comprising microbubbles encapsulating a gas within a shell comprising a plurality of compounds, each compound having a polar head group linked to a straight-chain hydrophobic group selected as having different chain lengths sufficient for longer chains to assemble beneath adjacent shorter chains thereby enhancing rigidity of the shell, the hydrophobic groups oriented toward the gas, wherein the compounds have the structure



where  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are hydrophobic groups selected from the group consisting of straight-chain alkyls, alkylethers, alkylthioethers, alkyldisulfides, polyfluoroalkyls, and polyfluoroalkylethers having a carbon chain length greater than or equal to 16 and less than or equal to 32 and where  $R_1$  is greater than  $R_2$  and  $R_1$  is greater than or equal to  $R_3$ ;  $R_3$  has one or more such hydrophobic groups having the same or different lengths; X is a linker connecting the hydrophobic group to the polar head group; Z is a polar head group selected from the group consisting of  $\text{CO}_2\text{-M}^+$ ,  $\text{SO}_3\text{-M}^+$ ,  $\text{SO}_4\text{-M}^+$ ,  $\text{PO}_3\text{-M}^+$ ,  $\text{PO}_4\text{-M}^+$ ,  $\text{N(R)}_4^+$ , a pyridinium or substituted pyridinium group, and a zwitterionic group; R is selected from the group consisting of -H, -CH<sub>3</sub>, alkyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyls containing one or more heteroatoms, and benzyl and can be the same or different; and Z' is a nonionic group selected from the group consisting of polysorbates, polyglycerols, polypeptides, polynucleotides, polysaccharides, polyvinylpyrrolidones, polyvinylalcohols, polyethyleneglycols, and combinations thereof.

2. CANCELED

3. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The composition of claim 1 wherein  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are straight-chain alkyl groups having from about 20 to 30 carbon atoms.

4. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The composition of claim 1 wherein X is selected from the group consisting of  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{CO}_2(\text{CH}_2)_n-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{CONH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{NHCONH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{OCONH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{O}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{NH}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{N}[(\text{CH}_2)_m]_2-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{S}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{SO}(\text{CH}_2)_n-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{SO}_2(\text{CH}_2)_n-$ ,  $-(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{NH}(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{CO}_2(\text{CH}_2)_o-$ ,

$-\text{[(CH}_2\text{)}_m\text{]}_2\text{N(CH}_2\text{)}_n\text{CONH(CH}_2\text{)}_o-$ , where m, n, and o are the same or different and are less than 5, DL-lysine, aspartic acid, glutamic acid, serine, cysteine, homocysteine, cystine, serinol, itaconic acid, tigilic acid, maleic acid, DL-malic acid, succinic acid, tartaric acid, malonic acid, citric acid, phthalic acid, terephthalic acid, N,N-bis[2-hydroxyethyl]-2-aminoethanesulfonic acid, N,N-bis(2-hydroxyethyl)glycine, 3-[N,N-bis(2-hydroxyethyl)amino]-2-hydroxypropanesulfonic acid, N-tris[hydroxymethyl]methyl-3-aminopropanesulfonic acid, and N-tris[hydroxymethyl]glycine.

5. (CANCELED)

6. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The composition of claim 1 wherein 'Z' is poly(ethyleneglycol) with the number of ethyleneglycol monomer units greater than or equal to 20.

7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for obtaining an ultrasound contrast image of body tissue comprising:

administering into a body a biocompatible composition useful as an ultrasound contrast agent comprising microbubbles encapsulating a gas within a shell comprising a plurality of compounds, each compound having a polar head group linked to a straight-chain hydrophobic group selected as having different chain lengths sufficient for longer chains to assemble beneath adjacent shorter chains thereby enhancing rigidity of the shell, the hydrophobic groups oriented toward the gas wherein the compounds have the structure:

$R_1\text{-X-Z;}$

$R_2\text{-X-Z;}$

and  $R_3\text{-X-Z'}$

where  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are hydrophobic groups selected from the group consisting of straight-chain alkyls, alkylethers, alkylthioethers, alkylidissulfides, polyfluoroalkyls, and polyfluoroalkylethers having a carbon chain length greater than or equal to 16 and less than or equal to 32 and where  $R_1$  is greater than  $R_2$  and  $R_1$  is greater than or equal to  $R_3$ ;  $R_3$  has one or more such hydrophobic groups having the same or different lengths; X is a linker connecting the hydrophobic group to the polar head group; Z is a polar head group selected from the group consisting of  $\text{CO}_2\text{-M}^+$ ,  $\text{SO}_3\text{-M}^+$ ,  $\text{SO}_4\text{-M}^+$ ,  $\text{PO}_3\text{-M}^+$ ,  $\text{PO}_4\text{-M}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{N(R)}_4^+$ , a pyridinium or substituted pyridinium group, and a zwitterionic group; R is selected from the group consisting of -H, -CH<sub>3</sub>, alkyl, cycloalkyl, substituted cycloalkyls containing one or more heteroatoms, and benzyl and can be the same or different; and Z' is a nonionic group selected from the group consisting of polysorbates, polyglycerols.

polypeptides, polynucleotides, polysaccharides, polyvinylpyrrolidones, polyvinylalcohols,  
polyethyleneglycols, and combinations thereof, and  
taking an ultrasound image of the desired tissue.

8. (CANCELED)

9. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 7 wherein  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  and  $R_3$  are straight-chain alkyl groups having from about 20 to 30 carbon atoms.

10. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 7 wherein X is selected from the group consisting of  $-(CH_2)_m-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mCO_2(CH_2)_n-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mCONH(CH_2)_n-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mNHCONH(CH_2)_n-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mOCONH(CH_2)_n-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mO(CH_2)_n-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mNH(CH_2)_n-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mN[(CH_2)_m]_2-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mS(CH_2)_n-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_m-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mSO(CH_2)_n-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mSO_2(CH_2)_n-$ ,  $-(CH_2)_mNH(CH_2)_nCO_2(CH_2)_o-$ ,  $[(CH_2)_m]_2N(CH_2)_nCONH(CH_2)_o-$ , where m, n, and o are the same or different and are less than 5, DL-lysine, aspartic acid, glutamic acid, serine, cysteine, homocysteine, cystine, serinol, itaconic acid, tigilic acid, maleic acid, DL-malic acid, succinic acid, tartaric acid, malonic acid, citric acid, phthalic acid, terephthalic acid, N,N-bis[2-hydroxyethyl]-2-aminoethanesulfonic acid, N,N-bis(2-hydroxyethyl)glycine, 3-[N,N-bis(2-hydroxyethyl)amino]-2-hydroxypropanesulfonic acid, N-tris[hydroxymethyl]methyl-3-aminopropanesulfonic acid, and N-tris[hydroxymethyl]glycine.

11. (CANCELED)

12. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 7 wherein  $Z'$  is poly(ethyleneglycol) with the number of ethyleneglycol monomer units greater than or equal to 20.

13. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 7 wherein the tissue is the heart and the image is a myocardial perfusion image.

14-20. (CANCELED)